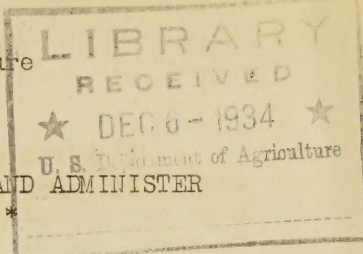


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United States Department of Agriculture
Extension Service
Division of Cooperative Extension

CAN EXTENSION CONTINUE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ADMINISTER
ENFORCEMENT AND REGULATORY MEASURES? *



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I am not sure whether the question of evolution has finally been answered in the field of biology. It is quite evident, however, from the subject assigned, that we have not settled the question of evolution in the field of extension work.

The Smith-Lever Act, section 2, defines extension as follows:
"That cooperative agricultural extension work shall consist of the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics, to persons not attending or resident in said colleges in the several communities; and imparting to such persons information and said subjects through field demonstrations, publications, and otherwise, and this work shall be carried on in such manner as may be mutually agreed upon by the Secretary of Agriculture and the State agricultural college, or colleges, receiving the benefits of this act."

From time to time we have had interpretations of the above language in an effort to define the duties of extension workers in order that we may not stray too far from the course outlined for our guidance. Such interpretations have been made by different Secretaries of Agriculture, by resolution of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges, and by officials of the Extension Service in the Department of Agriculture, and I suspect by many of us in the States, as we have been confronted with insistent pressure of individuals or groups who wished us to perform certain duties for their particular benefit.

If we briefly scan our activities during the past 20 years we shall certainly find that we have gone through a great period of evolution in the extension field as well as in others. Radical ideas of today become conservative on the tomorrow. If my memory is not at fault, most of our efforts in the early days were along the line of teaching farmers to grow two blades of grass where only one grew before. Somewhat later we directed our efforts to cooperative marketing and saving the surplus. Now we are plowing up every fourth row of cotton and killing pigs. Somewhere between these extremes we detoured temporarily into the field of farm management, economics, to discuss outlook, and we even paused briefly to cuss and discuss "extension weather." I suspect that our successors, 10 years from now, will be considering similar problems and severely criticising us for being so ultraconservative.

However, the problem is of great importance. The Extension Service must choose as to whether it will take the road to the extreme left or to the extreme right, or follow the middle course embodying the general direction of both left and right.

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Eighteen months ago we were driving ahead on a well-paved extension road. Suddenly we were confronted with a detour sign, and the detour has been exceedingly bumpy, stumpy, and stony. In fact, we found everything we might expect to find on a detour, except ruts. Many of us, and particularly our farmer friends, are asking the question as to when we are going to get back on the paved highway. In our State, and I presume that similar conditions prevail in most of the States, we simply were compelled to discontinue our educational efforts along the lines we had been following and redirect our efforts along new educational lines, and this, in turn, quickly carried us into the field of enforcement and regulatory measures. Up to this time I have no regret as regards the change in course, but as I look forward I am somewhat doubtful as to just where the new road will take us.

From an educational standpoint, I believe we have broken all speed records. In 18 months, in our State at least, we have reached practically every farmer. He has learned something regarding supply and demand, farm management, agricultural economics, organization, leadership, cooperation, contracts, credit, banking, law, sociology, and a vast amount regarding red tape. We have covered more ground during this brief period in educating people along these lines than we had covered during all our extension history. I believe that it has been worth the effort, and I am convinced that it has given us new vision; and, with this new perspective, we should be able to chart a new course for extension effort and render a greater service to the American people.

I should like to call to your attention a few of the problems and difficulties confronting us now which will undoubtedly confront us to a greater degree as we proceed along the path of readjustment in agriculture and assume more and more responsibility in the way of enforcement and regulation. Naturally, in moving so rapidly into a new field of endeavor there are many inequalities, human frailties, disappointments, and, in numerous instances, downright hardships worked on individuals or groups. All of us are more or less provincial, and from our own circumscribed viewpoint we cannot, or will not, see the problem as a whole. Accordingly, we step on the toes of many people, and the ones who are injured do not look beyond our immediate person to see whether some outside force has guided our movement but blames us individually for our action. In numerous instances, I have been told by farmers that the county agent, himself, was incompetent, an ignoramus, biased, and personally wreaking vengeance on the farmer for some fancied wrong. If it were not the county agent, then it was someone at the headquarters of the State office or in the Washington office who did not understand the particular situation, or otherwise the farmer's memory of acreage and production 5 or 6 years ago would not be questioned. In other words, the Extension Service in a State must take the responsibility and the blame for all inequalities, whether just or unjust, for the delays, and the misunderstandings. However, such criticism is not new. We had similar objections while we remained in the old regular educational field. We are now simply getting them in greater numbers and with more force and vehemence.

Recent experience also leads us to believe that our activities will be brought into the political field to a greater degree. Certainly, we have made every effort to stay away from party politics, but our friends and enemies, should there be such, especially when running for office, would not have it so. It has been rather annoying, and in the future may become more so, but even the political discussion of agricultural adjustment has some educational value. Being drawn into the political field is not new, for I suspect that in practically all of the States we have had experience with county and State politics, even to the extent of voting in a general election, as to whether a county would or would not have an agricultural agent.

To me the most serious objection is one of man power. Our volume of work has increased so enormously that we have been compelled to discontinue many of the services we had been giving for many years. I have had a farmer to ask me as to when the county agent would be in a position to aid him again with his production problems. Personally, I feel that he has a perfect right to ask for this assistance. It is still one of our fundamental problems, and in some manner we must take care of his needs. Our club work, especially with boys, has almost gone by default. This is too important a work to permit it to slip from our grasp. Either through reorganization of our activities or by an increase in personnel, or both, we must again render to our boys and girls, our men and women, the fundamental services we have been giving them for the past quarter of a century.

There is one more difficulty that I would mention at this time. This is the grave danger of bogging down in the mire of routine and red tape. Even directors of extension who are accustomed to, and create red tape themselves, fuss and fume about the multitude of forms and regulations attached to the adjustment program. How can we expect the free-born, independent American farmer who has been taught that he is master of his own destiny, ever to accustom himself to what has happened to him during the past year. Perhaps it is not impossible for, in one instance at least, one of our farmers refused to sign a simple receipt because it was not one page in length.

Let us turn then from the field of objection to the field of opportunity. We are in a period of readjustment. As the Secretary has so well stated, "America must choose." No matter what choice is made, I do not believe that any of us think that we should go back to the conditions of 5, 10, or 15 years ago. None of us can possibly foresee the ramifications of the new agriculture. I feel, however, that the land-grant colleges and the Department of Agriculture must take the responsibility of developing and guiding this new program.

No matter what form our new agriculture may take, we shall still have with us most of the fundamental problems to which we have been giving attention in the years gone by. The matter of soil erosion, maintaining and improving the soil fertility, economical production of crops, proper feeding of livestock, improvement of social conditions in the home and in the community, and numerous others just as vital, will be as important under the New Deal as under the old. They must be handled by some agency. Naturally,

I believe that the Extension Service is the logical agency, and if I have to make a final choice as between working on these problems or devoting all my attention to the extreme field of adjustment, enforcement, and regulation, I am quite sure that I would prefer the former field.

It seems to me, however, that we have new tools, new equipment, and a glorious opportunity to use the new conditions in solving the older problems. We have at our command in every community and every county the outstanding leaders organized into a machine and ready to function in any properly directed effort. We have been striving for such a leadership for 20 years. We knew if we could get the leadership, and properly direct it, our work would be easy. We made some progress, it is true, but only as a result of the adjustment movement during the past 12 months have we been able to reach our goal throughout the State. We cannot capitalize on this situation to the fullest extent if we permit one agency to look after the educational efforts, and another to handle the adjustment field even though it involves obnoxious features such as regulations and enforcements where such measures are necessary.

What I should like to see is sufficient personnel properly trained to carry on the educational efforts, agricultural adjustments, and regulatory and enforcement work as it applies to agricultural adjustment, in one administrative organization. If we cannot greatly increase our personnel, then it becomes simply a physical impossibility to handle the whole job. I doubt if we, in the State offices, fully appreciate the physical and nervous energy the county agents have expended in the last 12 months. Most of them have devoted a minimum of 100 hours per week rather than the recent idea of 30 hours. This effort has taken its toll in nervousness, irritability, and gray hairs, and in many instances the actual health of the worker. He cannot sidestep, he must see his constituents either in the office, in his home, at church, or wherever he may go, and certainly, in our State, there is no end in sight. We have contributed our personnel and our finances to the new measure without stint. But, if we are to continue to render the service demanded of us, we must have, at least, one assistant agent in every county and in our larger counties more than one, whose primary duty will be to work with boys and girls and with farmers and farm women, in our older conception of the strictly educational field.

This involves two very distinct problems. The first is financial. The second is properly trained available men. Our counties and the State are contributing more financially than they have done in years. I have not attempted to estimate the cost, but it will take large sums, and most of it must come either from the Adjustment Administration or from more direct appropriation. As difficult as is the problem of finance, I believe that the problem of personnel is more difficult, at least for the next few years. To increase our personnel during the past year we have literally combed the field to get properly trained, qualified men and women. We have drawn upon our older graduates, our new graduates, and have taken many of the better men in the vocational field, and it is now very difficult to find in our State the type of men we desire. With prospective openings, however, I believe that we can gradually build the force and coordinate them in such a

way as more rapidly and more effectively to solve our older problems and at the same time to handle the new.

The road will not be, as I have pointed out, perfect. We shall array against us individuals, groups, and vested interest, but this should not deter us if our program is sound, and I believe that we should drive ahead down the middle road, and drive hard.

These things are also of importance and are also of
the same nature.

There are also many other things of the same nature
and of the same importance and of the same nature.